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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 EB-08 /064 W
----------160307Z 102155 /66
R 150955Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6880
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 2360

SINGAPORE PASS TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR MY ID US
SUBJ: MALAYSIAN INTEREST IN U.S. POLICY DIRECTIONS

REF: JAKARTA 4723

SUMMARY: GOM WAS CONCERNED THAT STRESS ON DOMESTIC PROBLEMS DURING POLITICAL CAMPAIGN MIGHT FORECAST A RETREAT INTO ECONOMIC ISOLATION BY THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. THESE CONCERNS ABOUT U.S. ECONOMIC POLICY HAVE BEEN ALLAYED BY USG STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS SINCE JANUARY. GOM WELCOMES STEPS TOWARDS NORMALIZATION WITH SRV, CONTINUES TO SUPPORT ZFPN BUT DOES NOT FAVOR SUDDEN MILITARY CHANGES THAT WOULD UPSET STABILITY OF THE AREA. LEVEL OF GENERAL CONCERN ABOUT U.S. SOUTHEAST ASIAN POLICY EVIDENT IN OTHER ASEAN CAPITALS DOES NOT APPEAR TO EXIST HERE.
END SUMMARY
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1. IN MEETING WITH FOREIGN OFFICE SECRETARY GENERAL ZAKARIA ON ANOTHER SUBJECT, I ASKED FOR HIS VIEWS ON THE POLICIES OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION TOWARD SOUTHEAST ASIA. I NOTED THAT BECAUSE THE ASEAN RELATIONSHIP IS COMING PROGRESSIVELY CLOSER, MALAYSIA'S PARTNERS FROM TIME TO TIME GAVE US READINGS OF GOM ATTITUDES

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TOWARD U.S. POLICIES, AND THAT THESE PLAY-BACKS
SOMETIMES DIFFERED IN NUANCE FROM OUR PERCEPTIONS
HERE IN KUALA LUMPUR.

2. I SAID THAT ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE,
DURING HIS VISIT TO JAKARTA, HAD BEEN TOLD BY A SENIOR
OFFICIAL ACCOMPANYING PRESIDENT SUHARTO ON HIS VISIT
TO PENANG LAST WEEK, THAT MALAYSIAN OFFICIALS HAD
EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE DIRECTION OF U.S. POLICIES
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO VIETNAM.
I SAID I WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR HIS COMMENTS ON THIS
INDONESIAN PERCEPTION AND HIS BROADER VIEWS OF U.S.
POLICY.

3. ZAKARIA SAID HE WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR
DISCUSSION OF THIS TOPIC. MALAYSIA, HE SAID, HAD
EARLIER IN THE YEAR BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT POLICIES
OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, PARTICULARLY IN THE
ECONOMIC FIELD. DURING THE CAMPAIGN IT SEEMED TO
THEM THAT MR. CARTER PLACED MORE STRESS ON DOMESTIC
ISSUES THAN ON FOREIGN POLICY. THE GOM HAS BEEN
CONCERNED THAT THIS MIGHT INDICATE A TREND TOWARDS
ECONOMIC ISOLATION. SINCE THEN, HOWEVER, PRESIDENT
CARTER'S U.N. SPEECH, THE CARTER-FUKUDA COMMUNIQUE,
AND RECENT STATEMENTS BY ADMINISTRATION SPOKESMEN,
AMONG THEM ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE, HAVE ALLAYED
THESE CONCERNS AND GOM LOOKS FORWARD CONFIDENTLY TO
CONTINUED PRODUCTIVE COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED
STATES BOTH BILATERALLY AND IN THE ASEAN CONTEXT.
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4. AS REGARD TO VIETNAM, THE GOM STRONGLY WELCOMES
OUR MOVES TO NORMALIZE US-SRV RELATIONS. IT BELIEVES
REGIONAL INTERESTS ARE SERVED BY DRAWING THE SRV
INTO REGULAR ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL
DEALINGS WITH THE U.S. AND OTHER WESTERN POWERS AS A
MEANS OF BUILDING TIES AND INTERESTS THAT WILL MAKE
THE SRV A CONSTRUCTIVE MEMBER OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY.
MALAYSIA, HE WENT ON, ACCEPTS COMPLETELY OUR ASSURANCES
THAT NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM WILL NOT
BE ALLOWED TO WORK TO THE DETRIMENT OF RELATIONS WITH
OUR SOUTHEAST ASIAN FRIENDS. HE NOTED FURTHER
THAT I HAD, WHEN I HAD INFORMED HIM ABOUT THE WOODCOCK
MISSION, ASSURED HIM THAT THE U.S. HAD NO INTENTION
OF BUILDING UP THE CAPACITY OF THE SRV FOR REGIONAL
MISCHIEF, IF THAT SHOULD BECOME ITS PURPOSE, AND
THAT HIS GOVERNMENT ACCEPTED THESE ASSURANCES. IN
REGARD TO THE STATEMENT OF THE INDONESIAN OFFICIAL,
ZAKARIA WAS PRESENT DURING MOST OF THE CONVERSATIONS

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AND CANNOT RECALL ANY STATEMENT WHICH WOULD LEAD THE
INDONESIANS TO BELIEVE THAT MALAYSIA WAS CONCERNED
ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF U.S. POLICY IN VIETNAM.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 2360

SINGAPORE PASS TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE

5. WITH REGARD TO THE POLITICO-MILITARY ASPECTS
OF U.S. POLICY, THE GOM RECOGNIZES THE NEED FOR THE
U.S. TO MAINTAIN A GENERAL STRATEGIC BALANCE. WITHIN
SOUTHEAST ASIA, MALAYSIA CONTINUES TO SUPPORT THE
PRINCIPLE OF A ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY
WHICH LOOKS TO THE EVENTUAL REMOVAL OF ALL FOREIGN
BASES FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA. THE GOM AT THE SAME TIME
IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THE AREA AND
WOULD NOT SEE AS DESIRABLE ANY SUDDEN, DRASTIC CHANGES.
THE MANNER IN WHICH THE UNITED STATES INTENDS TO
REMOVE ITS GROUND TROOPS FROM KOREA, HE WENT ON, IS
AN EXAMPLE OF ORDERLY AND DELIBERATE CHANGE.

6. TO SUMMARIZE, ZAKARIA SAID THAT THE GENERAL
OUTLINES OF U.S. POLICY TOWARD SOUTHEAST ASIA WERE
CLEAR, THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD NO AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT
CONCERN BEYOND ITS HISTORIC AND TRADITIONAL INTEREST
IN THE AREAS OF TRADE, INVESTMENT AND COMMODITY
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STABILIZATION.

7. COMMENT: I HAVE NOT SENSED IN MY CONTACTS WITH SENIOR MALAYSIAN OFFICIALS OR OTHER MALAYSIANS CONCERNED WITH FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES THE LEVEL OF UNEASINESS ABOUT U.S. POLICIES IN THE POLITICO-MILITARY AREA WHICH APPEARS TO EXIST ELSEWHERE IN THE ASEAN REGION. THIS IS IN PART A RESULT OF MALAYSIA'S LESS INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES AND A CONSEQUENT LOWER LEVEL OF EXPECTATIONS.

8. SUPPORTING THIS VIEW IS THE EXPERIENCE OF PROFESSOR LINCOLN BLOOMFIELD OF MIT WHO DURING A RECENT VISIT HAD TWO MEETINGS WITH TEN HIGH LEVEL MALAYSIANS, INCLUDING THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND SENIOR ACADEMIC FIGURES. HE WAS QUESTIONED CLOSELY AND VIGOROUSLY ON THE FOREIGN POLICY DIRECTION OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. HE SAID HE FELT LIKE ONE WITNESS FACING TEN PUBLIC PROSECUTORS. HE WAS GRILLED INTENSIVELY ABOUT U.S. COMMODITY POLICY, PROTECTIONIST PRESSURES AND ACCESS TO U.S. MARKETS. HE FOUND IT SIGNIFICANT THAT THROUGH A TOTAL OF ALMOST EIGHT HOURS OF VIGOROUS EXCHANGE, THERE WAS NO MENTION OF U.S. BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES, GROUND TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM KOREA, U.S. "STAYING POWER" OR U.S. "POLITICAL WILL.)
UNDERHILL

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